

CHRONICLE AND COMMENT OF THE STAGE



Eleanor
Painter
in
"Gloriana."



Marcia van Dresser
in
"Freedom."



Julia
Sanderson
in
"The Canary"



Carolyn Thomson
in
"Little Simplicity."



David Warfield
in
"The Auctioneer"



Helen
Menken
in
"Three Wise
Fools"



Mary
Nash
in
"The Big
Chance"

Mitzi Considers the Case of the Ingenue

By Rebecca Drucker

It was the enthusiasm of a highbrow person of my acquaintance, whom the musical comedy of Broadway leaves coldly scornful, which first stirred me into curiosity about Mitzi. Among other things in her praise my friend said that she knew how to be witty with her body. Now the world is full of people who do laughter-provoking, grotesque things, but I had always considered wit beyond the power of the body to achieve. But I recognized what he meant when I saw her—though the humor of "Head Over Heels" is along such broad lines that it permits this power to crop out only in by-play. It is a pantomimic response to comedy so delicate and unexpected that it has precisely the effect of a pointed comment.

Mitzi has the pink and gold coloring of an ingenue. With blue eyes wide and a fixed smile, she might be the model for all ingenues. But her smile will not fix itself. It is a queer, slanting thing that throws wicked lights up into her eyes. There is a perverse comic within her that banisters her own pink-and-goldness and urges her on to wilful grotesqueness.

She speaks the idiomatic, unfashionable English of New York—but with a quaint, fastidious little accent that is not so much of pronunciation as of inflection, and that is quaintest when she drops into unconscious slang. She sat in a large chair in a sunny window. I, the stern inquisitor, sat opposite her. Between us, overhead, a large parrot with passionate, mournful deliberation was pulling out his tailfeathers. Now and then he injected a comment into our conversation.

Mitzi is a Hungarian, born in Budapest of middle-class parents. "Father's family is very old," said Mitzi. "Mother's is not nearly so old, and much newer." Father, with a white mustache, and mother, with a double chin, beamed down on us from the mantle shelf. "No one in our family had ever been on the stage, but mother did not say 'I shall die if a daughter of mine should go on the stage.' She said, 'If it will make the child happy'—and father said, 'She is such a little monkey that is where she belongs.' So I went to the Conservatory, which is a government school, where the discipline is very severe, and studied very hard and then graduated and played a season of straight comedy in Vienna. There an American manager saw me and brought me over eight years ago to play in the second company of 'The Spring Maid.' And I have never been able to go back to straight comedy since."

"Would you like to?" I asked. "I would love a real acting part. Perhaps the next piece I do."

We drifted into talk about Hungary. "I shall never go back. I am an American. But it is sad for my parents," she said, wistfully. "They are too old to come over and adapt themselves to American ways. When I came over and saw the skyline and the huge buildings I was so frightened. It was all so huge. I was eighteen and I felt so small. But I went to my cabin and did my hair high and put on a dress with a long train that I thought would make me look big, too, and I determined to stand up to New York. Of course, I love it now. It is my home."

We went back to a discussion of acting. The teachings of the Conservatory had been rigid upon one point—honesty. It had insisted upon naturalness above all things.

"I wish some ingenues I have seen could have been sent there to study," I said.

Mitzi looked up at me, and the spark of a mutual understanding was lighted between us.

She clasped her hand to her mouth to suppress a giggle.

"Oh, how funny ingenues talk! Like this"—and she gave a lifelike reproduction of the la-di-da accents of some of our younger actresses. "I am sure if a father heard his daughter talk like that he would say to her mother, 'For God's sake, why don't you make that child talk regular!' And why do they walk like this?" and Mitzi slithered along in what is the supposedly appealing manner of an ingenue. "I never saw anybody in real life walk like that. Did you?"

I had. I had seen young persons in real life who had modelled themselves on ingenues.

"Of course," said Mitzi, "it isn't easy to be natural. They say to an actress, 'Why can't you just be natural?' but that means eternal watchfulness. Every once in a while when I am tired I find myself speaking off lines without much thinking what they mean, and smiling sweetly—and then I give myself a shake to wake myself up, and make an extra face to prove to myself that I am not afraid of looking funny."

Some one came in to tell Mitzi that she would just have time to dress before dinner at 4:30. "Dinner at 4:30!" I exclaimed involuntarily.

"Yes, breakfast at 11 and lunch at 1 and dinner at 4:30—and I don't want any of them. Then nothing to eat until after the show, and then I may not eat because it is time to go to bed. That's what it is to be in musical comedy. When I sing my song, 'Just Like Other Folks,' I feel like my little acrobat—awfully sorry for myself. That's because I'm hungry, I guess."

Vaudeville

PALACE—Bessie Clayton and her company of dancers is the headline feature. Chie Sale returns to vaudeville with a new edition of his rural Sunday school benefit characterizations. Frisco remains for a third week. Blossom Seeley, Kate Elinoro and Sam Williams and the Watson Sisters are some of the others on the bill.

ALHAMBRA—The very good bill at the Alhambra this week offers three distinct headline features—Blanche King, the singing comedienne; Helen Ware, one of the foremost dramatic actresses; and the Avon Comedy Four. The supporting bill includes Mr. and Mrs. James Barry, Rena Arnold and Jack Allman in a song offering; Julian Hall, the "Jazz Boy" and others.

ROYAL—Eddie Leonard and his minstrel show is at the top of a bill which includes Valerie Bergere, in a Japanese playlet; Harry Langdon, in a skit entitled "Johnny's New Car"; Hallen and Fuller, in an allegorical satire called "The Corridor of Time"; Milo, Chico and Company and the Gladiators.

RIVERSIDE—Belle Baker makes her first appearance as an individual star with new songs. Muriel Worth, Charley Grapewin and Anna Chance, Frank Dobson, Harry Hines, Lou and Jean Archer and the Ferreros complete the bill.

COLONIAL—Charles (Chic) Sale, the famous portrayal of rural types, will share headline honors with Bert Kallmar and Jessica Brown. Lois Josephine and Tyler Brooks return with a programme of songs and dances. The patriotic novelty feature, "Art," Santi in oriental dances, Donald Kerr and Effie Weston and Miss Merle and company complete the bill.

LOEW'S SEVENTH AVENUE—Friend and Downing, Harry K. Morton and Zelle Russell and O'Brien Havel and Miss Valeska will be vaudeville headliners the first half of the week. "Private Peat" will be the photoplay attraction. The Cabaret De Luxe heads the bill the second half of the week. Wallace Rold in "The Man From Funeral Range" will be the picture.

One-Week Houses

STANDARD—David Belasco will present "Polly With a Past," with the original cast, including Ina Claire, Cyril Scott, H. Reeves-Smith, Herbert Yost and Louise Galloway.

SHUBERT-RIVIERA—"Parlor, Bedroom and Bath," the farce by Mark Swan and C. W. Bell is this week's attraction here.

LOEW'S SEVENTH AVENUE—Charlotte Walker, in Eugene Walter's play, "Nancy Lee," comes here this week.

BRONX OPERA HOUSE—The morality play, "Experience," is the play at this theatre.

BROOKLYN

MAJESTIC—John D. Williams will present Lionel Barrymore in "The Copperhead," by Augustus Thomas.

MONTAUK—The spy play, "Watch Your Neighbor," is next week's play.

"Daddies" Moves To the Lyceum
"Daddies" will continue its successful run at the Lyceum Theatre, beginning to-morrow evening. The transfer has been made necessary to make room for the appearance of Frances Starr in Edmund Knobloch's new play, "Tiger!" at the Belasco Theatre.

New Show at the Columbia This Week

"The Best Show in Town" is the title of a new burlesque that will be presented at the Columbia Theatre to-morrow afternoon. It is in two acts, and was written by William K. Wells, with music by Hal Dyson.

New Plays This Week

MONDAY—At the Globe Theatre Charles Dillingham will present Julia Sanderson and Joseph Cawthorn in a new musical comedy, called "The Canary." The piece was written in French by George Barr and Louis Veneuil. For its musical comedy manifestation, Ivan Caryll has furnished a score; and there are additional orchestral and vocal numbers by Irving Berlin and Jerome Kern. The story of the play concerns itself with a valuable diamond which a curio dealer manages to get stuck in his throat. Only by singing high C can the gem be released, and the unwilling jailer finds relief. The stage settings are the work of Joseph Urban.

At the Astor Theatre Messrs. Lee and J. J. Shubert will present "Little Simplicity," a new musical play, for which the book and lyrics have been written by Rida Johnson Young, and the music by August Barratt. The play, a musical comedy of youth, love and romance, is in three acts, the first at an inn in Tunis, Algeria; the second in the Latin Quarter, and the third "Somewhere in France." The cast includes Carolyn Thomson, Carl Gantvoort, Marjorie Gatenon, Stewart Baird, Camerica Sisters, Charles Brown, Eugene Redding, Phil Ryley, Ben Hendricks, Florence Hersford, Polly Bryor and Allan McDonald.

At the 44th Street Theatre Robert B. Mantell will appear in a revival of "Richelieu." Genevieve Hamper and Fritz Leibler are featured in the large company supporting the tragedian.

At the Manhattan Opera House David Warfield will begin a limited engagement in "The Auctioneer," the first of Mr. Warfield's great stage portraits. The company will contain Miss Marie Bates in her original role of Mrs. Eagan, while other familiar names are Helene Phillips, Harry Llewellyn and Tony Bevan. The play has been rewritten and reproduced by Mr. Belasco.

TUESDAY—At the 39th Street Theatre, on the afternoon of Election Day, Messrs. Lee and J. J. Shubert will present "The Long Dash," a drama of to-day, by Robert Mears Mackay and Victor Mapes, co-author of "The Boomerang." The cast will include Robert Edeson, Henry E. Dixey, Violet Kemble Cooper, Millicent Evans, Byron Besley, Malcolm Duncan and others.

WEDNESDAY—After two postponements, "The Comforts of Ignorance," a satiric comedy by Butler Davenport, is announced to open on this date at the Braham Playhouse.

Benefit for 11th Engineers At Cort Theatre

The Association of the 11th Engineers' Auxiliary will give a benefit performance for the regiment at the Cort Theatre on November 10, through the courtesy and cooperation of Major G. Gunner and Lieutenant Colonel J. Fawcett. Several hundred soldiers have been rehearsing for the past few weeks on what promises to be the biggest of all soldier shows. The purpose is to build a home at Camp Merritt where the mothers, wives and sweethearts of the men can meet those who are about to go over. Camp Merritt is the embarkation point and thousands of men are stationed there for a time before they embark. The necessity, therefore, for such a place is greater at this camp than it is at the average camp. No less a person than George M. Cohan will personally direct the entire production. The book is the work of Sergeant Edward Anthony, who has been a contributor to several of the New York dailies, and the music is by Sergeant Louis Merrill. Mr. Cohan will have as his assistants, Frank Leo Short, Michael Ring and Private William H. Smith, to whom much of the credit for "Yip Yip Yaphank" is due.

Another Soldier Show In Preparation

Another soldier show is coming to New York. The boys at Camp Merritt will produce "Good Luck Sam" at the Lexington Theatre for two weeks beginning Monday, November 25, through the courtesy and cooperation of Major G. Gunner and Lieutenant Colonel J. Fawcett. Several hundred soldiers have been rehearsing for the past few weeks on what promises to be the biggest of all soldier shows. The purpose is to build a home at Camp Merritt where the mothers, wives and sweethearts of the men can meet those who are about to go over. Camp Merritt is the embarkation point and thousands of men are stationed there for a time before they embark. The necessity, therefore, for such a place is greater at this camp than it is at the average camp. No less a person than George M. Cohan will personally direct the entire production. The book is the work of Sergeant Edward Anthony, who has been a contributor to several of the New York dailies, and the music is by Sergeant Louis Merrill. Mr. Cohan will have as his assistants, Frank Leo Short, Michael Ring and Private William H. Smith, to whom much of the credit for "Yip Yip Yaphank" is due.

The Provincetown Players start their season, about November 15, with three new plays, by Susan Glaspell, Edna S. Vincent Millay and Eugene O'Neill. As usual, the players will act and stage their own plays.

They will give six bills this season. Among the writers of the plays which they plan to produce are Wilbur Daniel Steele, Mary Heaton Vorse, Rita Wellman, Lawrence Langner, Ira Remson, Floyd Bell, George Cronin, Lincoln Steffens, Witter Bynner and Theodore Dreiser.

Five dollars paid in advance admits one to associate membership, covers initiation fees, and entitles one to one season ticket with the privilege, not otherwise obtainable, of buying extra tickets for single performances.

Revival of "Richelieu" Recalls Its History

Though no one, so far as known, has come forth with the claim that the publicity methods of the modern press agent were invented by the Chinese centuries before the dawn of civilization, still they are of greater antiquity than P. T. Barnum, according to Robert B. Mantell.

The methods date back at least to "Richelieu," presented at Covent Garden for the first time on the night of March 7, 1839.

"Richelieu" was exploited in London before its first performance, much in the fashion of "Chanticleer" in Paris a few years ago. Bulwer, like Rostand, was the darling of both the literary world and society. "Richelieu," like "Chanticleer," was announced long before its completion, and possibly even before the author had set pen to paper. Then, after it was finished, Bulwer's play, like Rostand's, was withheld until the mind of the playgoing public had been worked to a fever heat of expectancy.

When finally the psychological moment came Covent Garden was crowded

Provincetown Players Begin New Season

The Provincetown Players vigorously deny the rumor that they have gone down with some of the other little theatre movements. "The news of our death has been greatly exaggerated!" states a letter accompanying their new prospectus. "We are not only very much alive, but we have taken over a larger building at 133 Macdougall Street, which is being remodelled. The new playhouse has enabled us to enlarge our stage one-third, and gives greater seating capacity."

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Khaki-Clad Men to See "Daddies" on Sunday

Through the courtesy of David Belasco a special performance of his production of "Daddies" will be given free to men in uniform to-night at the Lyceum Theatre.

The performance for soldiers, sailors and marines scheduled at the Lyceum for Sunday night is under the auspices of the Stage Women's War Relief, an organization which has been untiring in its efforts to secure the best theatre has to offer for our men in service.

Secret Service Play At 14th St. Theatre

"The Man They Left Behind," a Secret Service play by Barton King, which is said to have met with great success on the road, where it is now being presented by no less than four companies, will be the attraction at the 14th Street Theatre all next week, starting with Monday's matinee. Written around the great war it is said to possess a patriotic appeal that will be bound to grip the heart of every American man or woman who sees it.

How the Bairnsfather Cartoons Became a Play

"How did Captain Elliot and I happen to write 'The Better 'Ole'?" said Captain Bruce Bairnsfather, just after the last big laugh at the Greenwich Village Theatre had assured him that the play was duplicating its success in London.

"Well, to tell you the truth, I don't know how. The play just wrote itself, you might say. It was a case of two minds with but a single thought, and that was the portraying, as nearly as possible, of the lights and shadows in the romantic, mud-soaked life of Old Bill.

"You see, although it is not generally known, I had written two short half-hour sketches before I ever did a full-length play. The first of these was produced at the London Hippodrome and ran during the entire season of the revue then being presented. Then Charles B. Cochran, who later produced 'The Better 'Ole,' suggested that I elaborate this sketch, which had also been based upon my cartoons, into a full-length play. I mulled over this idea for a long time, but nothing came of it.

"When I was in France I met Captain Arthur Eliot, a humorist and former actor, and again the topic of making a play out of the romance of Old Bill intruded itself and insisted upon being heard. Still nothing came of it, although Captain Eliot and myself were 'getting warm,' as you might say, over the idea.

"Then, during an interval of leave in England, the idea began to take shape in my mind, and slowly the romance of Old Bill evolved into a play. Captain Eliot possesses a great knowledge of the stage, and by incessant discussion and exchange of ideas, based upon the atmosphere which had already been created by my pictures and books, Eliot and I were enabled to cooperate very smoothly with the play. I executed all the scene models of the play after discussions with Eliot.

"After seeing the rehearsals of 'The Better 'Ole' I went into a regular funk. Somehow, it seemed to me that we were taking awful chances, and the night before the play opened it wouldn't have taken much persuasion to make me call the whole thing off.

"However, on Saturday evening, August 4, 1917, the anniversary of England's declaration of war against Germany, a super-crowded house greeted the premiere of the play in the Oxford Music Hall, a theatre in the West End of London that had never before housed anything except musical bur-

lesques and revues. Charles B. Cochran presented the play and Arthur Bourchier, a most clever comedian, created the part of Old Bill.

"The reception that the piece received was simply amazing. Every newspaper in London contained eulogistic notices the next day, and Eliot and I were as happy as British Tommies in Blighty. The booking was so strong that it was impossible to obtain seats for weeks ahead. It was prophesied, then that the play would run for the duration of the war, and the turn of events on the Western front makes it appear now as if this prophesy was to be fulfilled.

"The success of the play was also interesting in view of the fact that many of the seasoned 'first nighters' who went to our show in London, were rigid supporters of the time-honored stage conventions and their attitude toward Eliot and myself was hostile. They regarded us as two authors who were gambling in a new and dangerous subject, and it was their solemn opinion that the play was doomed. However, the opinion of these reactionary gentlemen has changed considerably since those trying days.

"Eliot and myself have never considered that 'The Better 'Ole' was a play, in the ordinary sense. We have always called it a 'show' and asked that it be judged on its merits as pure entertainment—nothing more. "I was lucky enough to return from the Italian front a week prior to the production in London, and consider myself equally fortunate in having been enabled to see the American premiere of the play at the Greenwich Village Theatre. And I must congratulate Mr. and Mrs. Cochran upon giving us a most artistic and intelligent presentation of their charming little playhouse. It gratified me beyond expression to see how our English 'jokes' 'got over' as you say in America, because it proved that America and England are now closer together in sympathy and understanding than they had ever been before the outbreak of the world war.

"Incidentally I want to congratulate Mr. and Mrs. Cochran upon their perspicacity in seeing the possibilities of 'The Better 'Ole' in manuscript form, and having the courage of their artistic convictions after the show had been rejected by nearly every other manager in New York. They deserve their success with the play and I am glad they got it."



Mitzi in "Head Over Heels"